

# VERA LYNN

— • —  
LET'S MEET  
AGAIN

LIKE WE DID HALF  
A CENTURY AGO

A ROMANTIC HOUR  
FROM THE EARLY  
CAREER OF BRITAIN'S  
MOST ENDURINGLY  
POPULAR DANCE  
BAND VOCALIST

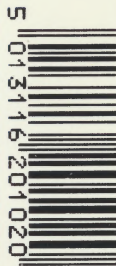
VERA LYNN · LET'S MEET AGAIN · PAR 2010

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19. MEDLEY: I HEAR A DREAM – YOU'RE HERE,  
YOU'RE THERE, – YOU'RE EVERYWHERE – SO RARE
20. WISH ME LUCK (As You Wave Me Goodbye)

T.P.L.63'31"

PAR 2010



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Even by the standards of a gushy, implausible, romantically inventive Hollywood musical biopic, the life and career of rags (well almost) to riches (well certainly) Vera Lynn takes some beating. About all that's missing is some juicy drama. It's been a life with plenty of adventure - radio shows, here and in USA, film parts, TV shows, and thousands of miles travelling, especially in wartime to entertain Our Boys.

Dame Vera Lynn (OBE '69, CBE '75) began life shortly after the end of the World War One in East Ham, a then-poor part of London. Her childhood memories, as recounted in her autobiography *Vocal Refrain* (W.H. Allen, 1975), were generally happy, apart from a dangerous illness (diphtheric croup) which very nearly killed her before she was three. She had a brother three years older but was a solitary child who played with dolls. She was singing in public from the age of seven and she still has the doll she used as a prop to win a prize singing "Glad Rag Doll." She quickly latched on to the attractions of sentimental ballads and she enchanted East London clubgoers sobbing out such tear-jerkers as "What Is A Mammy, Daddy?", "I've Got A Real Daddy Now" and "Dream Daddy".

Learning a song was always a long and difficult task but once learnt it stayed learnt. To this day she could do a long show without having to refresh her memory with a glance at lyrics.

Vera Welch's progress was swift. At eleven she joined a juvenile troupe, Madame Harris's Kracker Kabaret Kids, no less, and decided to drop her real name for one she thought more outstanding. Her grandmother's maiden name had been Lynn and little Vera liked the sound of that. She had her own troupe by fifteen and was being managed by Howard Baker ("The Gig King") who supplied bands and cabarets for all occasions around London and Essex. Howard had some association with Billy Cotton and she had a brief string of engagements with that famous band but perhaps Billy didn't like the

idea of an under-age girl working with his roistering musicians; he sent her home in the middle of a tour.

At this point she suffered a fleeting setback, failing an audition for Henry Hall's BBC Dance Orchestra. No matter, she succeeded with Joe Loss and made her debut broadcast with him in 1935. At the same time she was working with the charming pianist Charlie Kunz at the Casani Club.

Next came three-and-a-half exciting years with the legendary rascal Ambrose. (There are some good examples of her work with Bert on this collection.) Ammie was extremely hesitant and uncertain about hiring Vera - just as he was eventually terribly reluctant to let her leave.

With that band Vera, still a teenager, had to grow up fast. She got her first taste of professional jealousy or upstaging. The Ambrose Orchestra already had a femme thrush, Evelyn Dall, a glamorous American doll. And she was Queen Bee, y'see? Saucy Evelyn was Bert's Constant Companion and she didn't bother to hide her bitchy resentment of timid Vera.

Nevertheless Miss Lynn had a good time with the band, lost her heart and gained another name. A clarinet and tenor player known as Harry Lewis joined Ambrose shortly before war broke out in 1939 and persistently set about her seduction. They were soon engaged and eventually (engagements were drawn out in those days) married, by which time Harry was in the RAF and playing with what became known as the Squadronnaires.

All the records on this album came from the period of Vera Lynn's career described above. The earliest is "It's A Sin To Tell A Lie", among the first on which she had solo billing, and it was made in 1936 with the famous Charles Smart at the cinema organ.

The first of her Ambrose recordings represented here is the amusingly schmalzy "The Little Boy That Santa Claus Forgot" - so different from Evelyn Dall's earthier material (It's another Daddy song: "I Feel Sorry For That

Laddie, He Hasn't Got A Daddy.") Though there are a few odd song selections - "Mexicali Rose" is a nice enough heartstring-tugger but it can only be sung sincerely by a female crooner if she's a lesbian and that's unthinkable! - but generally they adhere to the tested and true Vera Lynn formula of simple sentimentality - paying the price of lying, the horrors of loneliness, waiting and yearning for love, or optimistic, think-positive "philosophising" about everything coming out all right in the end and "It's A Lovely Day Tomorrow" (*with instrumental accompaniment*).

Understandably, the best tracks tend to be those with the fine Ambrose Orchestra behind her such as the pleasantly silly "Little Sir Echo" on which she duets with Denny Dennis who went on to sing with the great Tommy Dorsey Orchestra.

This version of her most famous number, "We'll Meet Again", has an accompaniment by Arthur Young on "Novachord". The same type of organ is behind her on my favourite track "Goodnight Children Everywhere", though that's a matter of personal taste, of course.

Serious intellectual analysis of the Vera Lynn style seems pointless: it has pleased millions for more than 50 years without being anything particularly gifted or adventurous (unlike, say, Billie Holiday, Anita O'Day or Rosemary Clooney). She has a distinctive sonority and a built-in histrionic sob which has been a parodist's delight, a matter on which she has been touchy and in 1944 she tried to kerb "Spiteful imitations". However, the dividing line between the sincere flattery of an impressionist and malicious ridicule is not an easy one to establish in law. She wrote: "I tried to express my annoyance that firstly in guying my sentimental but sincere approach to the fighting services they were mocking what I believed passionately to be important work, and that by descending to spite they were undermining my ability to make a living." Not a view that would cut much ice these days with the makers of the TV show *Spitting Image*.

Some sophisticated musicians may be indifferent to the hint of pub song contest winner in her act but her virtues are clear, English-type diction (no Yankee imitation), intelligent phrasing and an enviable ability to sing in tune. She has quoted with pride an anonymous article in *Radio Times* in 1941 which neatly summed up her approach. An extract: "The words of her songs may have been so much sentimental twaddle. But she treated them with as much tenderness as though they were precious old folk songs, as though they meant something, something that she believed in and assumed that her audience believed in too.... simply and sincerely, all the silly, insincere songs about home and the little steeple pointing to a star and the brighter world over the hill...."

Her talent and charm has taken Dame Vera to performances in many lands, to meetings with Royalty and other VIPs and from cramped city streets to a comfortable home in the beautiful Sussex countryside where she can indulge in such favourite pastimes as gardening and painting.

Where better to meet her again than on this typical programme of '36 to '40 performances?

DAVID GRIFFITHS, London, Spring 1991

1. WE'LL MEET AGAIN ..... (3.26)  
(Parker-Charles) Dash  
Accomp. ARTHUR YOUNG ON THE NOVACHORD  
r. 28.9.39
2. WISHING (WILL MAKE IT SO) ..... (3.19)  
(De Sylva) Redwood Music  
with Instrumental Accomp. r. 5.7.39
3. MEXICALI ROSE ..... (3.05)  
(Stone-Tenney) FD & H  
with Instrumental Accomp. r. 25.4.39
4. I PAID FOR THE LIE THAT I TOLD YOU ... (3.13)  
(Light-Sherman-Hoffman) Campbell Connelly  
with AMBROSE & HIS ORCHESTRA r. 5.7.39
5. I SHALL BE WAITING ..... (3.09)  
(Parker-Charles-Irwin) Dash  
Accomp. ARTHUR YOUNG ON THE NOVACHORD  
r. 10.1.40
6. LITTLE SIR ECHO ..... (3.01)  
(Smith-Fearis-Girard-Marsala) Chappell  
Duet with DENNY DENNIS  
with AMBROSE & HIS ORCHESTRA r. 26.4.39
7. THE LITTLE BOY THAT SANTA CLAUS ... (2.54)  
FORGOT  
(Kennedy-Connor-Leach) Peter Maurice  
with AMBROSE & HIS ORCHESTRA r. 26.10.37
8. GOODNIGHT CHILDREN EVERYWHERE ... (2.54)  
(Rogers-Phillips) Cecil Lennox Ltd.  
Accomp. ARTHUR YOUNG AT THE NOVACHORD  
r. 29.12.39
9. MY OWN ..... (3.33)  
(Adamson-McHugh) EMI United Partnership  
with AMBROSE & HIS ORCHESTRA r. 2.3.39
10. WHO'S TAKING YOU HOME TONIGHT ... (2.52)  
(Connor-Sherwin) FD & H  
Accomp. ARTHUR YOUNG AT THE NOVACHORD  
r. 21.3.40
11. THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S ..... (2.55)  
(Furber-Adams) Ascherberg Hopwood & Crew  
with Instrumental Accomp. r. 6.4.38
12. HARBOUR LIGHTS ..... (3.06)  
(Kennedy-Williams) Peter Maurice Music  
with CHARLES SMART at the Organ,  
CYRIL GRANTHAM saxophone r. 4.3.37
13. IT'S A SIN TO TELL A LIE ..... (2.48)  
(Mayhew) FD & H  
Accomp. CHARLES SMART at the Organ r. 15.9.36
14. LONELY SWEETHEART ..... (3.21)  
(Strauss-Dale-Miller) EMI Music Pub.  
with AMBROSE & HIS ORCHESTRA r. 27.11.39
15. THE MEMORY OF A ROSE ..... (3.07)  
(Kennedy-Young) P. Maurice  
with Instrumental Accomp. r. 1.11.40
16. IT'S A LOVELY DAY TOMORROW ..... (3.12)  
(Berlin) Irving Berlin Music (England)  
with Instrumental Accomp. r. 11.2.40
17. I'LL PRAY FOR YOU ..... (3.17)  
(King-Hill) Noel Gay  
Accomp. ARTHUR YOUNG AT THE NOVACHORD  
r. 10.1.40
18. A NIGHTINGALE SANG IN BERKERY ... (3.12)  
SQUARE  
(Maschwitz-Sherwin) P. Maurice  
with Instrumental Accomp. r. 5.6.40
19. MEDLEY: I HEAR A DREAM ..... (3.17)  
(Robin-Rainger) Famous Chappell  
YOU'RE HERE, YOU'RE THERE, YOU'RE  
EVERYWHERE (Kahal-Loeb) FD & H/Redwood  
SO RARE (Hurst-Sharpe) K. Prowse  
Duet with JACK COOPER with Orchestral Accomp.
20. WISH ME LUCK (As You Wave Me Goodbye) . (3.08)  
(Park-Parr-Davies) Chappell  
Accomp. ARTHUR YOUNG AT THE NOVACHORD  
r. 8.11.39  
T.P.L63'31"

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# PARADE

## VERA LYNN-LET'S MEET AGAIN

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